

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Masao Asada

Pearl City Peninsula, the area between Pearl City Tavern on Kamehameha Highway and Ford Island, was Masao Asada's home. He was born there on July 20, 1908 to Otojiro Asada, an independent charcoal maker and farmer, and Masuno Asada, a homemaker and home laundry worker. Through an intermediary, Otojiro Asada purchased land in the names of his nisei sons.

Masao Asada attended Pearl City School up to the seventh grade. From 1923 he helped his half brother, Kazuo Sumikawa, who had a produce business. Asada would peddle fruits and vegetables at Ford Island and, later, Hickam Field, while his brother would sell at Fort Kamehameha, Fort Shafter and Fort Ruger. In 1929, they opened a small grocery store in Pearl City.

On December 7, 1941 Asada witnessed Japanese planes flying in from the Wai'anae direction. In the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attack, the Asada family's waterfront land was bulldozed and condemned by the military who paid them less than the original purchase price. Asada and his brother lost their military base business. They were able to sell their merchandise to civilians, including defense workers, and to naval ship stewards. After the war the navy purchased the remainder of their land. Masao Asada and his brother moved to Kailua, where they opened Oneawa Market. Asada first retired in 1968 when the Oneawa Market closed, then came out of retirement in the 1970s to run a liquor store.

Masao Asada married Sumie Yamashita in 1938. They have two children, a son and a daughter.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Masao Asada (MA)

March 25, 1992

Kailua, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

[Editor's note: Also present at the interview is MA's wife, Sumie Yamashita Asada (SA).]

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Masao Asada, for the World War II oral history project, on Wednesday, March 25, 1992, at his home in Kailua, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Mr. Asada, let's start. Why don't you tell me first, when you were born and where you were born.

MA: Okay, I was born in Pearl City, July 20, 1908.

WN: What part of Pearl City?

MA: Pearl City Peninsula is what it is actually is. About halfway down to the end. Pearl City Peninsula is about a mile, mile and a half, I should say, from the boundary. We used to call the boundary where the railroad used to run. And from the railroad tracks [i.e., O'ahu Railway & Land Company] down they used to [call it] Pearl City Peninsula.

WN: The railroad [tracks] ran alongside on what we call Kam[ehameha] Highway now?

MA: No, it's (further) down (about one-half mile from Kamehameha Highway). Well, in Pearl City, (the main part of town was near the railroad station). (From the railroad station down we considered it to be the start of Pearl City Peninsula.) Pearl Harbor is what they call the East Loch, and then Pearl City Peninsula extends, and the Waipahu side of the (peninsula) was the (Middle) Loch.

WN: Oh, I see. West Loch was more toward 'Ewa.

MA: 'Ewa side. West Loch extends into Honouliuli, the old Honouliuli. (The entrance to West Loch from the ocean is near Hickam Field.)

WN: You mean the . . .

MA: Well, [Waipi'o] Peninsula.

WN: Oh, I see.

MA: And so the loch extends close to Hickam Field.

WN: Pearl City Peninsula?

MA: No, the [Waipi'o] Peninsula. Pearl City Peninsula is right down (from Pearl City town), and then (extends to near) Ford Island. So Ford Island was maybe a mile.

WN: You mean from the . . .

MA: Pearl City Peninsula to Ford Island.

WN: Oh, that far?

MA: Yes, it's quite far. Because the olden days, the cruiser was able to go as far as halfway of Ford Island, but they never put a cruiser in there before, that I know of. But there all these destroyers used to anchor in the East Loch. Down on the Middle Loch, around the [Pearl City] Peninsula side, not too many was coming in there. Mostly near Ford Island side, near the entrance side. But I don't know when they dredged the harbor. They dredged the harbor.

WN: Were you there when they dredged it?

MA: Oh yeah. It was before the war. And they were dredging and especially Ford Island side, I think it's pretty deep now. Right around, near the entrance to Pearl Harbor, on Ford Island side, on Middle Loch side, over there was naturally deep.

WN: I see. So the area between Pearl City Peninsula and Ford Island was dredged?

MA: Yeah, they dredged the whole harbor. [Beginning in 1902, a channel leading into Pearl Harbor was dredged, allowing large numbers of naval ships to enter.]

WN: How would you get to Pearl City Peninsula?

MA: Well, when you come in on Kam[mehameha] Highway, you know where the Pearl City Tavern is? Well, that's where you come in, and you just keep on going straight down.

WN: Okay, so that's Lehua Avenue?

MA: Lehua Avenue, yes. And Lehua Avenue extends all the way down to the [Pearl City] Peninsula. And I think it went down to. . . . Coral Avenue used to be the last road on Pearl City Peninsula. And then the next one was Aloha Avenue, and then we were on Franklin Avenue.

WN: And in those days, the roads were paved and everything?

MA: Well, in the olden days, it wasn't paved, because [at one time] the whole peninsula was owned by the railroad.

WN: Dillingham?

MA: O'ahu Railway [& Land Company], yes. And of course, all along the waterfront side, there

were [families] like the Waterhouses and the old Forbes family, and then the Robinsons and then way on the end, before World War I, is—chee, what was that guy's name? You know the old American Factors? Used to be Hackfeld and Company, German. Well, the president of Hackfeld and Company built a home right on the end of the peninsula. He had a big home over there. Then when war started, they, I don't know, the government took over everything. So . . .

WN: In World War I?

MA: World War I. Then, later on, the Magoon family came in. Miss Magoon was married to O. N. Tyler. (I was told Mr. Tyler was a navy officer.)

WN: Tyler.

MA: And they had a home way on the end, that was way after World War I, before World War II. And right next door was her sister now, I can't think of her sister's name. You know where Gem [Department Store] is, in downtown?

WN: Kapālama?

MA: Kapālama. Is that Kapālama?

WN: Well, there's a Gem's Kapālama.

MA: No, no, there's one . . .

WN: Ward Avenue?

MA: Ward (Avenue).

WN: Oh, the Ward family.

MA: One of the Magoon daughters was married to the Ward family. And the Ward family owns all that property over there.

WN: You mean, the Ward Estate?

MA: The Ward Estate.

WN: The area surrounding the [Neal S.] Blaisdell Arena [in Honolulu]?

MA: All that area. So they had a home over there.

Then going around the other way (to Pearl City Peninsula), there was a Harry Cobb. He was treasurer of O'ahu Railway [and Land] Company. Ted Cooke had a home on the waterfront too. And Dr. (Arthur Hodgins' summer home). And then Robert [W.] Atkinson, he was the president of Hawaiian Dredging [Company].

WN: Did Dillinghams have a home there?



MA: Dillingham family had a home too, way on the other end. And before the war [World War II], [before] Atkinson moved to Nu'uano. He leased the property to Pan-American. And his [and others'] home [became] the Pan-American [China Clipper] base when they were using seaplanes. And so, the whole Atkinson home over there—he had a big yard over there, it was Pan-American [China Clipper] base. That was when Pan-American first started to fly. [Pan-American China Clipper service began in 1935.]

WN: So this must have been in the thirties?

MA: It could be late thirties. Forties, they were flying already.

WN: Right. So this is before the war, World War II, yeah?

MA: Yes, long before World War II [1935].

WN: These families, did they live there permanently or was this more like a beach . . .

MA: More like a summer home.

WN: Summer home, I see.

MA: But some of them used to live [there permanently], but most of them were summer home.

WN: Was it a nice beach or something up there?

MA: Well, the beach was nice at that time. But when the navy—before the war—the navy start bringing in a lot of ships and, oh, that area was all contaminated. They used to run oil, you know, to cover up the (shoreline), because the ships just discharge everything. And it must have been a good many years later that they don't allow ships to dump out all their waste, so that I think now it's clean. But before the war and during the war, oh, that beach was terrible.

WN: As a kid growing up over there, was it a good beach?

MA: Oh yes, we used to go out fishing, all kinds, and we used to enjoy out there. We used to go out swimming, you know. And there was a big (wharf)---the [O'ahu Railway & Land Company] railroad used to own that pier. And olden days, at one time, they used to ship pineapple. They used to raise pineapple way up above the heights. That was where [Pacific] Palisades is now. All that was all pineapple before. [The pineapple was grown by Libby, McNeill & Libby.]

WN: Oh.

MA: So all that pineapple, they used to bring it down [to Pearl City Peninsula], and ship it by boat to town.

WN: I see. So they used to bring it by truck from [Pacific] Palisades down to the pier . . .

MA: Yes.

WN: . . . at the [Pearl City] Peninsula, and then the ship used to . . .

- MA: Sometime they have a barge. And take it down to (Pier 16, I think).
- WN: They didn't use the railway for that?
- MA: They didn't use the railroad too much. I don't know why.
- WN: Maybe they were using it more for sugar?
- MA: No. Later years, I think, they did use the railroad, but in Pearl City, they didn't have too many side tracks where they have freight cars to come in. But later years, they did extend more side tracks to load and unload. So in later years, I think, they were using the train. I don't know when they quit planting pineapple up there, though. But at one time, it was pineapple.
- WN: Did Dillingham have their---did O'ahu Railway [& Land Company] have any kind of headquarters over there?
- MA: No, they had a station, a ticket agent, you know. And he used to handle everything, from mail all the way. . . . We didn't have no post office then (chuckles). The ticket agent was running the post office and everything. Because all the mail used to come on the train before, when the train was running (chuckles).
- WN: I guess in those days, that was real country over there.
- MA: Oh yes. But 'Ewa district had a courthouse in Pearl City. So it ['Ewa district] extends from 'Aiea all the way down to Wai'anae, [so] the ['Ewa district] court was in Pearl City at one time. But we didn't have any police station or whatever. The police were operating from the courthouse. And the courthouse, they had the tax assessor in there, and the police and whatnot.
- WN: Tell me something about your dad [Otojiro Asada].
- MA: Oh, my father was sort of a independent person, you might say, that he never wanted to work for anybody. So he came to Pearl City, and in those days part of the peninsula, on the upper side, was rice patch. So he came to Pearl City and he was a rice farmer for two years. He was a bachelor on the farm, and according to what he was telling us, when he was still a bachelor, he used to stay way up in Kipapa Gulch. And I guess in those days, nobody---well, [people] owned the land, but nobody take care of it, and he was up there and he cut the guava trees, was making charcoal. His profession was wood cutting and charcoal. And so he was saying that he used to make charcoal over there and if he go down, daytime, they suspect him [of trespassing], so he used to go down from early evening and deliver his charcoal to Waipahu. His main charcoal customers were the---well, olden days, they had these *senbei* manufacturers, small family-type. They were one of his best customers. So he (sold all the charcoal to them).
- WN: Did he have like a oven that he---how did he make charcoal in those days?
- MA: Well, most charcoal, they have a cement oven like, you know. But he didn't have that, he used to pile the wood---well, the hole in the ground was about, oh, four feet deep. Then from the bottom, he used to pile his wood up in pyramid. Maybe the thing was about, oh, eight or

ten feet high. Then as soon as he gets all this wood piled up in there, he wraps it all around with this roofing iron. And then, when he covered with all the roofing iron, then he used to put mud. So every time he makes charcoal, he banks it with this mud, and (there were four vents).

WN: Where does he put the mud?

MA: Outside of the roofing iron.

WN: I see.

MA: And then, right on the top, he used to have an opening of—if I'm right, he had an opening about two or three feet wide, and about maybe another three feet or four feet in length. And then he starts his fire from the top, see.

WN: Oh.

MA: And when the fire catches on to the big one, then he used to cover it, on top of that, and then he used to pack mud on top of it. And he used to have four vents. And first ten days, he used to watch that day and night. So he, I don't think he slept too much nighttime.

(Laughter)

WN: This was *kiawe*?

MA: *Kiawe*.

WN: How big were the logs?

MA: Oh they were—he was using mostly the stumps. See, he buys the wood, and then he digs the stump out, he don't pay for the stump. He just pay for the wood. When he tackles a big tree, he digs around for couple of days before he knocks it down. But he used to dig all around and cut the biggest root, and whichever way he wanted to tumble that thing, he used to chop the roots away.

WN: So he paid for the wood? What do you mean he paid for the wood?

MA: I guess he was pretty sharp. He used to go and see a tree, and lot of these wood he was buying from the railroad.

WN: I see.

MA: The property is railroad, so he estimate a tree, he used to grade the wood, number one and number two. Number two is, I think, about three or four inches in diameter, branches. But anything bigger than that was number one. So he'll say, well, he gonna have one cord of number one, and, say, half a cord of number two. Then he estimate how much he's gonna sell it, so he gonna pay so much to buy it.

WN: So he buys the whole tree?

MA: He buys the whole tree.

WN: I see.

MA: And then the small branches like that, well, as a kid, I used to help, work, cut the wood, too. When I was about seven or eight years old. I can't swing an axe, so he give me a cane knife.

(Laughter)

MA: I do the small ones.

(Laughter)

WN: That's kind of hard, eh?

MA: Yes.

WN: Cane knife for *kiawe* wood.

MA: No, the cane knife, you get it sharp, boy, you can cut it. Just swing it around. But years later, he quit that and then he went into papaya farming. He was one of the early one, papaya farming. And he bought quite a bit of land around where we were living, on Franklin Avenue.

WN: From [B. F.] Dillingham?

MA: [From] Dillingham, we bought some land. But Dillingham, he was kind of prejudiced. I'd say he didn't like to sell it to Japanese. Some of the land, I think, was Dillingham's land, but my father had a very friendly tax assessor. I think his name was Hayselden. And whenever he wants to buy land, and if it belongs to Dillingham, this tax assessor would go and tell Dillingham that he want to buy that place. And so Dillingham didn't suspect that this guy was a middleman (chuckles). And he'd go and buy the land, and he'll get all the titles in his name, then he transfers it to my father. But my father was kind of a—he was looking more forward to years ahead, I think. All the land that he bought, he was telling us that he's an alien and if there ever is a war between Japan and United States, "They gonna take my property away, because I'm an alien." So he used to deed all the property to us, to the kids, my brother and I, you know. And so all the land around that he bought, was either in my name or in my brother's name, you know.

WN: How old were you when you started to have the land deeded to you?

MA: Oh, I was pretty small yet. When he bought the first lot, I was only about four or five years old, I think. I can barely remember. But he did buy one lot. See, those lots down Franklin Avenue was 50 by 200 feet, you know. So was a pretty good-size lot.

WN: Now you were saying there were a lot of big shots that lived in that area, and then you have like your father. Were there other---did all the Japanese live together in the same area?

MA: Well, there were quite a bit of Japanese family there, but they were all working for these people there, you might say the big shots that owned the property, as yardboy, taking care of

the yard and whatnot. So like the Dillinghams and all the property owners down there, they all had Japanese men as yardboy, they call 'em.

WN: And were they supplied housing?

MA: Yes, they were supplied housing. They used to have (caretakers' homes, some were across the street from the main home).

WN: Were there other people like your father that owned land and . . .

MA: No, nobody (on the peninsula).

WN: . . . was independent?

MA: Nobody was over there. My father was the only independent one over there. I know one time, one of this family was fired, and when you get fired, you get no place to go, so they used to cry to my father to let them stay there. And my father had several old shacks around there, it was old but it was liveable. And so they used to rent and stay there for a while until they find another job. But in [Pearl City] Peninsula, my father was the only independent one that wasn't connected to anybody.

WN: How many Japanese families would you say were living up there?

MA: Oh, about, roughly about ten to twelve, I guess, families. But there were a few bachelors too, Japanese bachelors over there.

WN: Did you---did the families get together occasionally?

MA: Well, we used to, my father used to have this *mochi* pounding thing, you know, so every once a year we used to have quite a party.

WN: New Year's time?

MA: Yes, before New Year's like that. And they all bring their *mochi* rice and pound it together. So sometime they used to pound all day. But they all come and help, so no problem. But I think New Year's about the only time everybody used to get together. Sometime we used to have church service at the home. Pearl City Hongwanji minister used to come down. Then they got so that once a month, they used to have it so each family would take over one, "Next month, I'll have it at my place," and so forth. They used to go around that way. So it was quite a community.

WN: So all the Japanese were members of the Hongwanji?

MA: Yes, they were all Pearl City Hongwanji members.

WN: Did you folks socialize at all with the big shot families?

MA: Not in those days. They looked at Japanese as though we're all laborers, or whatever (chuckles).

- WN: Was your father—you know, being so independent and owning land—was he like a leader or a big shot among the Japanese?
- MA: No, I don't think so. But lot of times, something happen, they used to come and talk things at our place. Because he [MA's father] don't have a boss, so much easier for people to come to our place. If you go to somebody, a caretaker's home, if the boss comes around, they, maybe, may not like it. So they used to come to our place and talk, like that.
- WN: Besides Hongwanji, were there other kind of organizations?
- MA: No, there wasn't anything in Pearl City in those days.
- WN: No other Japanese did farming down there?
- MA: No.
- WN: Other than your father?
- MA: Nobody down there. Years later, before World War II, there were quite a bit of people and there were some farming.
- WN: But not when you were a small kid?
- MA: When I was small kid, (we were the only independent family).
- WN: So as a small kid, what did you do to have good fun?
- MA: Well, we used to go fishing a lot.
- WN: What did you catch?
- MA: Oh, in the mornings, you go down the pier [i.e., landing], you can get *pāpios*. And then we go out on a boat and in the harbor, we used to, on this—they used to call this '*ōmaka*, looks like a—what's that fish?
- WN: A small fish?
- MA: No, it's a good-size fish. But it's different from *pāpio*. The *pāpio* is a wider fish.
- WN: Right, right.
- MA: But this '*ōmaka* was a sort of a, rather like a . . .
- WN: Like an eel?
- MA: No, what they call that fish? They sell that in the market there.
- SA: Not *pāpio*?
- WN: Same color as *pāpio*? Silver?



SA: *Akule?*

MA: Yeah, *akule*.

WN: *Akule*, oh.

MA: Yeah, it's look more like *akule*, except this '*ōmaka* had yellow stripes on the body. I don't see that fish anymore around, though.

WN: I never heard of it.

MA: I don't know, the '*ōmaka* is, must be a Hawaiian name.

WN: So you used to go out on what, a rowboat?

MA: Yeah, we used to get boat. The big shots, they used to have rowboats. We used to go out on their boat and (chuckles) fish outside, when they are not around.

Before the war started, that was way back in 1923, my brother started a produce business. And then, later on that year—he had a helper one time, he hired a man and I think he got quite gypped out of that guy. He fired him anyway. He was going out with merchandise and don't bring back too much cash. (Chuckles) So he fired him. And then he asked me to take over and we were going to Ford Island and sell our produce to the families [living] over there. Not too many houses over there.

WN: Who lived on Ford Island back then?

MA: Ford Island, that time, when they first had that, the army had half of Ford Island, and the navy had half of it. The army base was Luke Field. That's the first place they had the airplanes. And they had about thirty homes on the island. And I used to go out on a rowboat. I used to row across the bay into Ford Island, do business over there.

WN: That was one mile?

MA: About a mile.

WN: How long did it take you?

MA: Well, on a calm day, was easy, but, boy, on a windy day, was rough rowing. (Laughs) And sometimes you see some big sharks, too, you know. This one time I know this big shark start circling my boat, and the fin's up. Just by looking from my boat, there could be about, oh, good eight or ten feet, big buggers with their fins sticking out. Summertime, there's plenty of sharks in there. But never heard of anybody got attacked with the sharks, though. In fact, I never heard of that over there before. But lately you hear so much about the sharks attacking. Olden days, we used to go swimming and they never bothered us.

WN: So, your brother started the produce store in '23?

MA: Yes.



WN: You were fifteen years old. But prior to that, what, you were going to school?

MA: Oh yes, I was going Pearl City.

WN: Where did you go to school?

MA: Pearl City [Elementary] School.

WN: And you walked?

MA: Oh, I had a bicycle. (Chuckles)

WN: Oh yeah?

MA: So I was riding a bike to school.

WN: How many other children lived in that peninsula?

MA: Oh, there was a quite a bit. Maybe about—at least twelve to fifteen kids. See, olden days [beginning in 1891] the railroad used to run a train [i.e., a railroad branch line] to the [Pearl City] Peninsula, they had a special engine and one coach. [B. F.] Dillingham owned the railroad. The railroad owned the property. The [O'ahu Railway & Land Company] owned all the [Pearl City] Peninsula property. [In 1888 B. F. Dillingham acquired seventy-five acres of Manana Peninsula, later called Pearl City Peninsula, for fifty dollars an acre. The following year, another 145 acres were added. O.R. & L. then ran a branch line down the peninsula in 1891.] So each time a train is coming in from town, [passengers] would wait at the Pearl City station, and this train would pick up the passengers, if there is any, to go down the peninsula. After the [main] train passed Pearl City, going on through Waipahu to 'Ewa Mill, they used to run the [branch] train, whether there was passenger on or not. So each time a [main] train comes into Pearl City, the [branch] train would go down. And each time a [main] train is going to town, they come down and run the [branch] train down, and then meet the [main] train that's going to town at the peninsula.

WN: You mean, you talking about a special tracks that ran off the main tracks . . .

MA: Yes, off the main track.

WN: . . . down into the peninsula . . .

MA: Yes.

WN: . . . on the waterfront, you mean?

MA: No, was alongside of Lehua Avenue.

WN: Oh, I see.

MA: The track was running all the way.

WN: But the whole train didn't go down, just one.

MA: Just one coach and if there was any freight, they used to hook a flatbed. And if there wasn't too much freight, they didn't use that. We had to go and pick it up at the Pearl City station. Anything, big stuff that's bulky, like if you want to build a house and get lumber coming in, why, a whole load of lumber would come in and they would bring 'em down.

WN: On the tracks?

MA: Yes. Then from the track, the consumer that ordered the lumber, that was his, they had to pick it up at the track.

WN: So there was like a smaller engine?

MA: Yes, they had a, like, they had an engine, similar to this—well, now, you don't see it, but the plantation used to have a small engine. That's the kind of engine they had.

WN: Did your father use the railroad, at all, for his business?

MA: No, I don't think so. He used to have a horse and—they used to call that dray, eh?

WN: Gray?

MA: Dray, it's a flatbed, four-wheel, built for freight. And one horse. And he used to deliver his charcoal to Waipahu himself. But, you know, you have a horse, the upkeep is not too cheap, you gotta feed 'em, eh? So later years, there was one old Japanese man, he had an old truck. So he used to hire and he quit keeping the horse. But way back when I was kid, (he had a horse, and our job was) to feed the horse.

WN: That was one of your chores?

MA: Yes, winter months when there are lot of grass, you know, we used to take 'em out in the pasture out there and tie 'em to a *kiawe* tree, and graze 'em out there, in the grass.

WN: What other chores did you have as a kid?

MA: Well, I don't know. I know whenever there was work, we used to have to help him. When we start taking out the charcoal, we used to have to bag 'em. We used to bag 'em in a big brown gunnysack. The thing used to weigh about eighty pounds, you know.

WN: Charcoal was like whole?

MA: Well, it's all broken up when you take it out. In chunks, pretty good-size chunks.

WN: Let me turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay. Tell me something about your mother [Masuno Asada].

MA: My mother, she used to do all the family cooking. And at one time, when my father was in the wood business, he used to have one, in fact, several men, he used to hire. And they used to stay at our place and my mother used to do all the cooking for them. You know, 'cause they were bachelors. Then she used to do all the laundry. She used to take in laundry too, in younger days, you know, wash.

WN: For the bachelors?

MA: And some of the families too. *Haole* families that lived out there. They didn't have any home help so they used to hire this wash woman. And she used to go out, help in washing laundry all around.

WN: Did she help your father at all, in the business?

MA: Well, not outside, no. She used to stay home. Take care of the house and whatever she can do at home. She was taking in some laundry too, my mother. In those days, all hand wash. No such thing as washing machine. (Chuckles) So she used to work hard too.

WN: Did you help your mother at all, too, in, you know, around the house?

MA: Oh yes, around the house, sometime, whatever we could do.

WN: Plus you had two sisters, too.

MA: Yes. They were all young yet, below me.

WN: What was your house like?

MA: Well, was built something like a bungalow. (Laughs) Iron roof. Then when he start cutting more wood, why, when he hired these bachelors like that, he used to extend the house.

WN: Was your father's house bigger or nicer than, say, the other families that worked for the big shots?

MA: Well, it was a pretty good-size home we had. I don't know, in area, I don't know. Roughly maybe twenty-five feet by thirty feet. I think there were two—I think one side was one big bedroom, and one side was a living room.

WN: Okay, so, what about things—was there anything like sports, organized sports or anything down there?

MA: No, not in those days. (Laughs)

WN: Nothing organized.

MA: Nothing organized. We used to get together and play marbles and stuff like that. We used to have a game we used to play a lot, peewee?

WN: Peewee, yeah.

(Laughter)

MA: You remember those things?

WN: Well, I—lot of people have told me about it.

MA: Yeah.

WN: With the stick and . . .

MA: Right, cut the broom handle and we used to have a lot of argument over that.

(Laughter)

MA: We used to fight a lot when you go into that. One tries to cheat the others.

(Laughter)

MA: But there wasn't too much, because the parents never did too much with the kids. And they all working, so they were too busy to—so we had to find our own enjoyment.

WN: Were you folks allowed in the big shots' yards or anything like that?

MA: Well, lot of times they're not there. But the yardboys, they don't like kids to come around, mess the yard up.

WN: Oh yeah. So after your father was doing charcoal—did he sell wood too, by the way?

MA: Yes, he was selling wood too.

WN: Firewood?

MA: Firewood. He used to sell wood by the cord, by the whole chunk. Or some people wanted all chopped. He used to cut 'em into. . . . See, all the woods are four feet long. So he used to cut 'em in three sections, and the big ones, we used to chop it with an axe. And chop it to a size that they can use in the wood stove. And that was a job too.

WN: You folks had wood stove in your house?

MA: Oh yes.

WN: Kerosene?

MA: Wood stove.

WN: Oh, wood stove.

MA: Years later, we had kerosene.

- WN: Okay. Were there stores in the area? Where did you folks get your, you know, your goods, your rice and things like that?
- MA: Pearl City, when we were kids, there was only one store, the [N.] Miura Store on the corner.
- WN: That was where, on the peninsula, or . . .
- MA: No, way up on Kam[ehameha] Highway [and Lehua Avenue], right on the corner.
- WN: You mean where Pearl City Tavern is now?
- MA: Oh, right across [the street where the Pearl City 7-Eleven stands today]. I don't know when they terminated the market [N. Miura Store closed shortly after the end of World War II], but anyway the old folks died and one of the sons was my classmate, you know. Tom Miura, he's still living. I think he was one year older than me. But we used to go school together, his father [N. Miura] owned that store over there. And that was the only store. Then they had a Chinese store near the railroad station, right below the railroad station, Mow Leong Store. [Mow Leong Store was located where Lehua Elementary School stands today.]
- WN: Mow Leong.
- MA: There was a butcher shop too, Chinese butcher shop, was selling meat. And I forgot the name of that butcher shop. And they had one restaurant, Eto, Japanese fellow was running the restaurant over there.
- WN: So, did, like Miura Store, for example, would send *chūmon tori* down to your house?
- MA: Either that or we used to go up [to the store] and order. Like rice and stuff, they used to deliver. They used to have a horse and buggy. They used to deliver. But small stuff, we used to go and pick it up.
- WN: Oh, you folks used to go the store and go get it.
- MA: Yes.
- WN: Then nobody came to take your order.
- MA: Oh, no. But years later, there were. I don't know just how long. From Waipahu they start coming in. This Kato Store from Waipahu came in and they used to send a salesman and all the neighbors would gather at our place and they used to order their. . . . 'Cause that Kato Store was sort of a cash-and-carry, like, you know, you pay in cash, no charges. So salesman used to come our place in the evening, and then all the people know when he's coming, so whoever want to buy, they used to come down [to MA's house] and order. And he used to deliver at our place, then from there they used to pick 'em up and take it home. Sometimes my father used to shop in Waipahu too, I guess, when he delivers the charcoal and stuff like that. He used to buy things in Waipahu and come back. So we were pretty well organized on merchandising.
- WN: But Miura Store was mostly charge?

MA: They were all charge. Those days, I don't know how, they used to carry everyone [for] about ninety days, though. You don't pay by the month (chuckles).

WN: Did they have "new month?" Do you know what that is?

MA: Yes. They used to say, well, put it on "new month," then everybody would buy.

WN: Yeah.

MA: About twenty-fifth of the month. [Charges made after the twenty-fifth of each month would not be counted towards one's bill until the following month.]

WN: For big things like rice and feed, and things like that . . .

MA: They used to deliver. Mow Leong, years later, they start to deliver too. And the old man kind of retired and the son came. He was, I think, working in town someplace, and he came back and then he started running that Mow Leong Store then. And he used to deliver.

WN: So when you were growing up, the roads were all dirt roads?

MA: Well, Lehua Avenue was paved, but it was a narrow road. Hardly two cars could pass through. That's when the railroad owned it. So I think they had it paved at one time. And after that, they didn't do too much.

WN: And then Franklin Avenue was all dirt.

MA: The dirt road, yes. And then the railroad turned that road [over] to the City [and County of Honolulu]. That was way back, before World War II. When the city took it over, then they paved it. All the side streets and everything.

WN: The city took over the . . .

MA: . . . (whole peninsula road). The railroad turned the whole road (over) to the city. So that's when we got paved street.

WN: So Dillingham sold to the city?

MA: I don't know what the deal was, whether they sold it, or they just gave it to them, to maintain the (road). Until then, the railroad had to maintain everything. I know when the railroad had it, they used to have this *kiawe* tree growing alongside of the road. And this [Albert] Van Valkenburg was living over in the peninsula. He was the president of the [O.R. & L.] land department. And my father used to buy. . . . When he buys trees from the railroad, he used to do business with them. So when I was about ten or eleven years old, I think—no, not quite, about eight or nine yet, I think, one year summertime he wanted to hire me and cut the *kiawe* off. These young trees growing, cut all that. And so I said, "Well, I cannot tell you I going work." I said, "My father always waiting for me during summertime (chuckles), to help him."

So he said, "Oh, you go and tell your father that I want to hire you for several days to clear the road."



So I talked to my father, and he said, "Well," he says, "buying wood from him, so maybe you better go help."

(Laughter)

MA: So, you know how much he paid me? I work from eight in the morning till about three-thirty. Fifty cents.

WN: For the whole day?

MA: For whole day!

(Laughter)

MA: You work in the sun, too, you know. And in those bushes, there's a bee nest, you know. And one time, I got stung. And Van Valkenburg had another brother living with him. He was a cripple, he had a wooden leg, I think. He had a small cottage and he was living with the brother over there, and he used to—when I go to work or when he hires me, to get the tools, he used to give me the key and go in. Pull the tools that I need from the tool shack. And then, when I come back with the tools, then he'll check to see I got all the tools that I took out.

But one time, the bee stung me. It was only about two o'clock in the afternoon. And I went back, and first thing he saw me, he start grumbling at me. He says, "This is not three-thirty yet." He should give me a chance to talk to him.

And so I said, "Look," I said, "I got bee sting, I'm going home. I cannot work." (Chuckles)

Then he realized why I came back, you know. He said, "Does it hurt you?"

I said, "You try and get it yourself." I was so darn mad.

(Laughter)

MA: Then one time he came back again, a year later, I think. Summertime, he wanted to cut one tree down for his own (use), and he says his yardboy is going go and cut, so, "I want you to go help him."

And, boy, I think I worked with him two days, and then the (third) day, I quit, you know. I told him, "I'm not coming already." That old man so darn lazy, he let me do all the work, and he's sitting down over there.

WN: Who? This is Van Valkenburg?

MA: No, that guy.

WN: Oh, oh, oh, the yardman.

(Laughter)



MA: Yardman. Second day I went back and I didn't tell that man, but I told Van Valkenburg's brother, that I'm not coming from tomorrow.

He said, "Why?"

I said, "I can't get along with your man. Let him go cut it himself, 'cause he was just sitting down and let me do all the work. I don't want to come. I quit."

WN: Well, you must have been a good worker, then . . .

MA: Well, when I start to work, I used to work, you know. You getting paid, so you supposed to work. So I never did fool around. One time I was clearing the road, and I got through quite early, and I say, "I'm all finish already today, so I'm going home."

And he says, "No, you don't go home." The brother says. "Mr. Van's coming home four o'clock this afternoon, so you stay here until four o'clock."

So I says, "Well, what I going do, sit around?"

He says, "No, you go and get a rake and rake all the yard." (Laughs)

And I said, "All right."

WN: They had their own yardboy, eh?

MA: Yes, they had the yardboy too, but these fruit trees are terrible. I have one avocado tree in the back [MA's current home], boy, every day I'm there, this time of the year, all the leaves fall down. Oh, I raked it yesterday, and today it's full of leaves already. (Chuckles)

WN: Oh, boy. So, tell me about your [half] brother's [Kazuo Sumikawa] vegetable store. Did he start it in '23, or he already had it?

MA: No, he started in '23.

WN: Together with you.

MA: Yes.

WN: What made him to that, do you know?

MA: Well, he used to be a carpenter, you see. And then building start to slack, he was going as a carpenter to military bases. And that time, I think, part of Ford Island was still building and he was working over there. Several other boys used to go with him. They used to row across and go to work over there. Then, when that job got through, Wheeler Field, was kind of building up, and he was up there for several years. Then he finally decided he want to quit carpenter. Too much running around for jobs. So then he went into business.

WN: So what did he have to do to get started?

MA: Well, he started with produce. Years later, when I took over [peddling] on Ford Island, he

was (peddling) in Fort Kam[ehameha Military Reservation].

WN: Now wait, you started at Ford Island, you said?

MA: Yes.

WN: Doing what?

MA: Produce. I was taking care of the produce.

WN: Oh, you had another store?

MA: No, (I was supposed to be working for my brother).

WN: Oh, you used to row.

MA: Yes, row over (to Ford Island).

WN: Oh, I see.

MA: So, then I was taking care of Ford Island, and then whatever delivery on the [Pearl City] Peninsula side, I was doing all that. Then he was going to Fort Kam, selling vegetables. In those days, the mess hall used to buy too, you see. So we used to sell to the mess hall and then part to the families. Then he'll extend it to Fort Shafter. And then, this thing, it works like a chain, you know. You do business with the mess hall, and the mess sergeant would transfer to some other place, and then, if he likes you, he'll coax you to come over to where he's (transferred). So then he [Kazuo Sumikawa] went to Fort Ruger for a while. Fort Ruger had one mess hall, I think. I think one of the mess sergeants from Fort Shafter was transferred over there, and then this mess sergeant called him to, "Oh, you deliver over here too." And so he extended all through that.

WN: So he went all the way out to Fort Ruger?

MA: Yes. (Chuckles) He goes to Fort Kam and then he goes out to Fort Shafter, part of—of course, he cannot get all the mess hall, you know. He get some of it and there's some other dealers used to come in too. Then after he gets through (Fort Shafter), he used to go to the wholesaler and load up and come (home).

WN: Where was the wholesaler?

MA: In those days, all on River Street.

WN: Oh, I see. So you didn't deal directly with farmers?

MA: No. Some we used to, but not too much. There was one big farmer in Pearl City. And there were several small ones, but we didn't do too much. There were about two or three farmers in Pearl City that we used to buy from. And whatever they don't have, (he) used to pick 'em up in town.

WN: Was it a store, actual store, that you folks had?

MA: Yes, at first was just peddling. So just start from over there, and during the day, why, nobody comes out anyway, so (chuckles). But later on, we open a small store, start off.

WN: So in the beginning, you put things on a truck and then went around?

MA: Yes.

WN: Oh, so where did you go?

MA: Well, I was taking care of Ford Island and part of [Pearl City] Peninsula. And he used to go out to townside, Fort Kam and whatnot.

WN: So when you went to Ford Island, what kind of boat did you have?

MA: Oh, I had a flat-bottom rowboat.

WN: Rowboat?

MA: Oh yes. (Chuckles)

WN: And you put your vegetables on there?

MA: Oh yes, and row.

WN: Every day?

MA: No, about three times a week

WN: So three times a week you'd load your boat—how long was your boat?

MA: Around a sixteen-footer.

WN: Sixteen feet.

MA: And then, later on, that boat was little too small, so we built a flat-bottom boat. That was a big boat, boy, that was rough, boy. That was twenty-seven feet long.

WN: And only you . . .

MA: Yes. Twenty-seven feet and the center was four-feet-something wide. I was using a ten-foot oar.

WN: One oar.

MA: One oar, ten foot long, used to row with two oars.

WN: Oh, no wonder you have muscles.

(Laughter)

MA: And that's not easy, boy. Windy days was rough.

WN: You would go out in the morning and then come back in the afternoon?

MA: Yes.

WN: Hoo.

MA: Oh, in those days was lot of work.

WN: And the vegetables were in crates, you put 'em in?

MA: Oh, we put 'em in boxes.

WN: And then once you got to Ford Island, how did you get to the commissary [mess hall] there?

MA: Oh . . .

WN: Truck over there?

MA: No, we had a pushcart. Two-wheel pushcart. (Chuckles) Rope that thing and push it. (Chuckles)

WN: And that held everything?

MA: Yes.

WN: That's some work!

MA: Today's kids, they don't know how much work I did. (Chuckles)

WN: My goodness.

MA: Younger days, I used to take a beating.

WN: So you would start off at the pier, at the peninsula?

MA: Yes.

WN: Load in the vegetables.

MA: Yes.

WN: Row one mile to Ford Island, get off the boat, unload it onto the pushcart.

MA: Yes.

WN: The pushcart was on your boat?

MA: No, I used to (leave) it next to the boathouse over there.

WN: And push it to different places . . .

MA: Yes.

WN: . . . commissary . . .

MA: No such thing, commissary, there's a mess hall and then the families. I used to finish the mess hall first and then push up to the families.

WN: And they're all *Haole* families?

MA: Oh yes, all soldiers. There were only about a half a dozen sergeants' quarters, and the rest were all officers' quarters.

WN: So from the time you folks started in '23, you were going down to Ford Island, there were military over there.

MA: Yes.

WN: Oh. And so what kind of produce mostly?

MA: Oh, almost any kind. Island produce and some Mainland. Fruits and whatnot. Then way back, when they closed Luke Field, and when Hickam Field opened up [in 1938], there was a lieutenant colonel. He was commanding officer of Luke Field, and . . .

WN: Who was this?

MA: Chee, what was his name?

WN: Oh, we can get it later.

MA: Chee, I used to remember his name. Anyway, when they closed Luke Field, and when he was going to Hickam, the wife told me, "I want you to come to Hickam Field."

And I said, "Oh, go to Hickam Field?"

But she says, "Well, no more Luke Field, all the army's going to open base over there." So, she said, "Come over."

And so I start to go to Hickam Field before the war. Those days are funny, you know, that the officers go to the officers' club, and they're socially, and they get to recommend people they talk about. So I was pretty well accepted, and for a Japanese, I was the only (Japanese) doing business with the military base, way before the war. And I started Hickam, and then Hickam start to build up. [In 1917, the federal government acquired Ford Island for joint use by the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy. In 1919, Ford Island Air Station was renamed Luke Field. With the buildup of navy aircraft prior to World War II, the U.S. Army had to give up its facilities at Ford Island. In return, the U.S. government built a new airfield for the U.S. Army in 1938, named Hickam Field.]

WN: How did you get to Hickam?

MA: I used to drive over with a truck. Oh, (Lt. Colonel) [Eugene] Fitzgerald was the commanding officer there.

WN: So did they pay you [in] cash?

MA: No, we used to charge them by the month. But when Hickam Field was pretty well built up [after 1938], then the [U.S.] Navy in Pearl Harbor, all the high-ranking officers was over there. Captain of the [Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard], and then the lieutenant commanders and commanders. High-rankers only. There were only about ten houses over there and there was one lieutenant colonel, Jackson, I think. He was the [U.S.] Marine [Corps] colonel, commanding officer. He had a quarter over there too, inside the navy yard.

One day I was coming out of Ford Island—we used to catch the ferry and come out. And coming out of Ford Island, the ferry landing was on navy yard side. So we had to go in through the main gate, navy yard. And when I was coming out, the marine stopped me, and he said the captain of the yard, Captain Roberts I think it was, wants to see you. I was in a hurry to come home, you know, I had to, I went to take an order and then deliver that same day. So I told the marine, I said, “Oh, I can’t do it today, so maybe tomorrow or the day after.”

And then, the second day, I slipped by, I didn’t go back. I didn’t go and see him at the headquarters, you know. Then the third day, the marine tell me, “Oh, you didn’t go and see the captain, and he’s waiting for you.”

“Oh, tell him I’ll see him tomorrow.”

(Chuckles) I didn’t want to see him. I know what was coming up already. See, with all those quarters over there, he wants me to deliver. I know something like that is going come up, and I was so loaded already with work, I didn’t want to (take in more calls).

(Laughter)

MA: And so the third day, I was coming out, the marine (at the gate stopped me and) says, “Wait, don’t move.”

And then he called the sergeant out. The sergeant came out and he says, “Hey, you’re supposed to see Captain Roberts.” He says, “Okay, this marine is going to take you to the,” (laughs) he put the marine on my truck. “Now,” he said, “go to headquarters.”

(Laughter)

MA: Oh shucks. And I went in there, and sure enough, he wanted me to deliver. And he says, “When you want to start? We want you to deliver here, too. You’re passing through here every day,” he said, “I’m sure you can.”

But I said, “I’m loaded on the other side on my schedule.”

“Oh well, you fix your schedule,” and he says, “I want you to start from tomorrow morning. Here’s your pass.”

(Laughter)

MA: He already had a pass for me to go around there. So I couldn't refuse him. So finally I had to take care of that and the worse of it is from there on, Makalapa [Naval Housing] was starting to build up. And then, the families up there want me to (deliver there)—they have friends who just came in. He says, "Oh, my friend is so-and-so and just moved into the Makalapa area."

The wife would say, "Oh, on your way back, you can stop there, you're passing there anyway."

(Laughter)

WN: Was there any competition? Anybody else had same kind of produce . . .

MA: There was one more guy, Morris. He was a Portuguese guy. He was over there, but, I don't know, he didn't do, he was trying to come in [Pearl Harbor] navy yard, and he came in, and then finally he quit navy yard. And then, he was going around Hickam too. But, oh there was enough business for both of us, you know, we didn't fight about it. He came into Ford Island too, but he didn't last too long over there. The people over there were, I don't know, somehow they, I was lucky. They used to cater more to me.

WN: So, when you started in '23, you were doing mostly Ford Island only.

MA: Yes.

WN: And then your brother was going off to Fort Kam, Fort Shafter . . .

MA: Yes.

WN: . . . and Fort Ruger, later on. And then, what, as the years went on, the twenties, and the thirties, as other military areas were building up, your folks' business expanded then?

MA: No, we quit Fort Kam and Fort Shafter and (my brother) stayed in the (store). I was the only one was going out. My brother didn't go out at all anymore. He stayed home and took over the store. And we---it was 1929, we rebuilt a store in Pearl City [i.e., Asada Store]. And we went into full grocery and meat.

WN: In the peninsula, or . . .

MA: Yes, in peninsula [on Franklin Avenue].

WN: Oh, you had meat and things too, '29.

MA: Yes.

WN: I see. So it became more of a, like a walk-in place, too. People walk in and buy?

MA: Yes, it's a regular grocery store, old type of grocery store. And we had liquor in there too. During the war, liquor was good, you know. But we had all quotas. So people only can buy one quart, or one case of beer a week.



WN: Okay, we'll get into that, the wartime, little later. So in '29 you folks started the [store]. So at that time, Pearl Harbor area was building up, in the thirties? Makalapa and . . .

MA: (Hickam Field.) That was way back in late thirties [in 1938].

WN: Late thirties, Makalapa, oh I see.

MA: Yeah, about '39 or '40, before the war.

WN: Oh, I see.

MA: Hickam Field, I think, was around thirty—if I'm not mistaken, about '37. They start moving down there.

WN: Okay. So when you said an old-time grocery store, what do you mean by that?

MA: Well, you had the groceries and little vegetables, and we had some dry goods. Had a soda fountain in the store too.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 22-26-2-92

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Masao Asada (MA)

April 7, 1992

Kailua, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

[Editor's note: Also present at the interview is MA's wife, Sumie Yamashita Asada (SA).]

WN: This is an interview with Masao Asada, on April 7, 1992, at his home in Kailua, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, why don't we start today's interview. We were talking about you and your brother's store. And you know, when you went around to the different places, did you actually peddle the vegetables, or did you just take orders?

MA: Before, when we first started, we were peddlers. Then, later on, when we built the market, before we built the market, we quit the peddling. So I don't know how long we did the peddling.

WN: [Your brother] built the market in '29?

MA: The new market, yes. But he started the business in 1923. And we did that for about five years, I think. And then, we quit the peddling. My brother just started going in [i.e., peddling] on Ford Island, was first place he started. Then, when I joined him, he expanded to Fort Kam[ehameha], Fort Shafter (and Fort Armstrong).

WN: Why is it that you folks dealt mainly with the military?

MA: Well, I don't know, but we were all in the military base. I think 1926, he went into Schofield [Barracks], started to deliver Schofield. See, in the olden days, the mess hall used to buy from us, vegetables and fruits. So there was three squadrons on Ford Island. At first, there were only two squadrons, the sixty-fifth and the sixth pursuit squadrons. Sixty-fifth was a service squadron. Then the seventy-second squadron came in, and they had three. Oh, there was another one, the twenty-third squadron. So there were one, two, three at first. Then, towards the end, they added another one, and was four squadrons over there. Then I think about nineteen thirty-something, the commissary went into bidding for vegetable and fruits. We didn't bid on that, so we, from there, we just discarded all the squadron mess hall business, and we went only into family.

WN: Military family.

MA: Military family. And then, that's how we were mostly in the military. Then he was at Fort Shafter and Kam, and he was peddling in Schofield. Then when I took over Schofield, I went

into all the mess halls over there. And we were selling to all the mess halls.

WN: When you say sell, that means selling directly to them . . .

MA: Directly.

WN: . . . or taking order and then delivering?

MA: Well, the way we were doing was, in the morning, we were peddling all fruits and mostly vegetables. And we make our rounds, as we go in, we take the order for fruits. And we deliver that in the afternoon. The delivery in the afternoon was all order. We just pick the order up, make up the order, and then we deliver it [that same] afternoon.

WN: And then, when would they pay you?

MA: Monthly.

WN: Oh.

MA: We'll charge it to the mess hall, and [we would] send a statement, they'll send a check. So it was monthly payment.

WN: What kind of vegetables did you deal with mostly?

MA: Mostly island vegetables. Like the mess hall, most thing they were using was like, green onions, radishes, carrots, beets, and eggplant. And then we get all kinds of fruits, island fruit, like bananas. Bananas were the main item that they used to buy, and papaya, pineapple. And we were handling some Mainland fruits, but they didn't go too much on Mainland fruits. The mess hall was really for the breakfast fruits, like bananas. And we were selling lot of bananas. We used to buy all our bananas from this guy [A. J.] Campbell. He had big banana field in Mokulē'ia. Right now, last time I went to Mokulē'ia, it's all alfalfa over there. But Campbell [in the early days was] shipping bananas to the Mainland, and somehow he quit the banana. But that was years after we were out of that business. Oh, he had a big banana field over there. And shipping a lot of bananas at one time.

WN: Did you folks peddle to civilians at all?

MA: Well, around the [Pearl City] Peninsula.

WN: Oh, around the peninsula, yeah, I see. Did you go to, say, the Dillingham's place, and things like that?

MA: Well, they weren't there all the time. That was their summer home. So we didn't do too much. But there was [Harold] Dillingham, and most of the rich family was the Waterhouse, Albert Waterhouse, and Ross. Mrs. Ross was Mrs. Waterhouse's sister. Then (Mr.) Waterhouse was [working for the Waterhouse Estate]. And then (Mr.) George Fuller had a home (on the peninsula). (He was a bachelor.) George Fuller was vice president of Bank of Hawai'i. Then later on, [Mr. Bottomley] was the president of American Factors, moved in there. (His peninsula home was just for the weekends.) But all the rest of them, (Mr.) Harry Cobb, he was treasurer of O'ahu Railway [& Land Company], he was living in there [Pearl

City Peninsula] permanently. And there's [Victor] Schoenberg, he was a manager of Bank of Hawai'i, Waipahu. S-C-H-O-E-N-B-E-R-G. She was my teacher, Mrs. Schoenberg was. (Chuckles) Then [Albert] Van Valkenburg, he was the O'ahu Railway [& Land Company] land department president. And there were a [John] Schwanck family, an old German family. But they were retired. They had a home near the [Pearl Harbor] Yacht Club. (The Schwanck family lived there long before the yacht club came up.)

WN: Where was the yacht club?

MA: [Pearl Harbor] Yacht Club [property] was owned by this Chinese guy, Afong. And then, when Afong, in 1929, stock crash, he went bankrupt (I heard), and he had to get rid of all his land. That's when the yacht club bought his home. It was a big yard, big home. The Pearl Harbor Yacht Club originally bought the Ted Cooke home, but that was a smaller place. The building was big, big, two-story building. Originally that was built by the Jones Family. And then they sold it to the yacht club, and the yacht club first started in the peninsula over there. Then it was too small, so they took the Afong place.

WN: What did this Mr. Afong do?

MA: I don't know what he actually did, but I think they were connected with some dry goods store in Nu'uano someplace, on Nu'uano Street. But I don't know whether he was directly in or with his brother, I don't know. That part I don't remember. But they were one of the old Afong family [of Honolulu].

WN: Your store was cash-and-carry?

MA: No, we used to do credit, charge by the month.

WN: People could just pick what they wanted and pay you there, if they wanted.

MA: Yes. They charge it. We had quite a number of charge customers too.

WN: I was wondering, you know, as the, in the thirties, you know, war was approaching, did you feel any tension, you know, because you were Japanese, going to these places?

MA: Actually, there wasn't that much pressure. Local people didn't show that they were prejudiced amongst. Well, anyway, I didn't feel it, that way, either. And majority of the rich people living down there, their working people, the caretakers, are all Japanese. But they didn't do anything. Just like normal.

WN: What about the military? You know, when you went to Ford Island like that?

MA: Well, that was (before) the war anyway. During the war (we had to cut off all military delivery).

WN: When the war broke out, were you still able to go on the boat to Ford Island?

MA: (All military business terminated. December 6, 1941, was our last delivery.)

WN: Oh, this was in the thirties, before the war started?

MA: Oh yes, that was before the war started. I think it was in late thirties. Then in 1938 or '39—see, half of Ford Island was Luke Field and half was Naval Air Station. Then when Hickam Field opened up, they [U.S. Army] all moved to Hickam [Field]. So there was only [U.S.] Navy now over there [at Ford Island]. The whole island was navy. But as far as the quarters on Ford Island, they didn't build too much. Navy, they built it way up, where the [USS] *Arizona* [Memorial] is now. Just around there. And the officers' quarter, there's an old battery around, two battery on Ford Island. And they never used it there, that is, that I know of. And when I started to deliver over there, they were using as a bomb shelter, you know, they store their bombs inside there, airplane bombs.

WN: Did you lose business when Hickam was built . . .

MA: No.

WN: . . . when they moved out from Ford Island to Hickam?

MA: No, the thing is, Lieutenant Colonel [Eugene] Fitzgerald was commanding officer when Luke Field moved to Hickam. And that's when Mrs. Fitzgerald told me, "Hey, you have to come to Hickam Field. We want your service over there." (Chuckles)

So I said, "Well, all right. I'll try and wriggle up some way to go."

That's after we were peddling already, so we used to go. And then, when I first went over there, there wasn't that much. Hickam was just starting and they had quite a few officers' quarters all built up, but the non-coms' [i.e., non-commissioned officers] quarters, like that, wasn't built yet, so there was just a handful of officers' quarters when I started delivering over there. Then 1940, I think—see, to go to Ford Island, we used to have to go in through the [Pearl Harbor] Naval Shipyard main gate to catch the ferry. Then, one day, the guard over there, at the gate, he says, "The captain wants to see you."

Well, I had the feeling what was coming off already. See, the funny part of it is that the officers, in a clubhouse and they talk about all kinds of things, I guess the women especially. So I told this guy, "You know, I can't make it today." I said, "I have to go home already." I had the feeling that they want my services. I was loaded already. And so, I didn't go that day. And then I told the guard, "Well, maybe tomorrow or day after."

And then tomorrow I didn't come. And the day after I didn't come, I didn't go. And then the third day, when I was coming out, the guard at the gate, he told me, "Oh, you pull aside." He won't let me go out from the gate. So the Marine sergeant came out, he says, "Now I'm going with you." He said, "We're going to headquarters, we going see Captain Roberts."

And then, when I went in there, the captain was expecting me already and they didn't have too much quarters over there. Maybe was only about fifteen quarters, you know. And he says, "You know, we want your service over here."

But I said, "Chee, my schedule is all [full]." So I said, "Let me think it over." The third day I didn't come again, you know.

So the guard took me again. He say, "You were supposed to see the captain, you didn't go."



I say, "Oh yeah, I had problems, so I couldn't go see him." So I left it at that.

And then, the next day, he says, "Here's your pass." (Chuckles) He had my pass all made up, so I can go around the quarters. And he said, "I want you to start from tomorrow."

I said, "Tomorrow is hard."

He said, "No, you start from tomorrow." (Chuckles) He knew that I was going to prolong again. And so then I had no choice. I started. So actually, I have to come in early in the morning, and catch all that before I go to Ford Island.

Then, this Makalapa [Naval Housing] came up. And Hickam [Field] was building up, so, gee, myself, I couldn't handle it already. Too many (customers) to call. And see, we would go and pick up the order and deliver it the (same) afternoon. So I had to split my route. We had several boys working, so me and another boy took the navy yard, Hickam route. Ford Island, I had another boy go over there and do it. And when the war started, everything stopped one time.

WN: Yeah, okay, so when the war started, okay, what were you doing that day when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

MA: Well, that was Sunday morning. And we were at home and I had few deliveries early in the morning, around the peninsula. So I went, done my delivery, and I came home and it was about seven o'clock, I think. I generally start out about six in the morning, and finish out all delivering, come back. Wasn't too heavy a delivery, but milk and bread, and papers, and few other orders that was left, you know. We used to open the store (at eight o'clock) on Sunday morning. So just as I came home, I just sat in the truck and was reading the newspaper. Then I hear several explosions, you see. And being that I was delivering on Ford Island, I knew they were, where the [USS] *Arizona* [Memorial] is now, that place was a shallow point, and the dredger was dredging over there. I think they dredged over there for about a whole year, or more. And every so often, they used to blast, so I thought, oh that. My sister was in the store, my younger sister. And then I came in and she said, "Gee, what's that noise?"

I said, "Well, I think they're blasting over there, you know."

Then, it keep on blowing. So I said, "Eh, this is something else. It must be something else."

So I jump on my truck again, and I was going down to the pier to see. And just as I came to the end of Franklin Avenue, there was a road going down towards Coral Avenue. On the point, over there, was the big pier, that the navy and the army was using. And so I was going down to that point. And see, the fleet was in that time. As I was going, one of the cars kept coming, and I see him waving as he was coming. So I stopped on the side, and he says, "Get out of here! Get out of here! This is not practice! It's war," he tell me.

And just about the time he came up, when I stopped, I saw three Japan planes flying in from Wai'anae side. And when I looked up, I see this Japan insignia, the red *maru*, you know, under the wing. And I couldn't believe it, you know. Then when this guy came out, *Haole*, then I thought, oh, it's war. Get the hell out of here! And so I realized then that, and I rushed home, and they were all still at home. I said, "Get on the truck, we gotta get out of here."

And I took all my kids, and my wife and my sister-in-law were living right together. My brother was still sleeping I think, that time. And he says, "Oh, you fellow go," and he stayed back. He said, "I'm going to come with another truck." And so I load everybody in and we went way up to (Pearl City), on the Waimano Home Road. And about halfway up, we could see the fire and smoke [from Pearl Harbor], you know. Then later on, he came up and then we stayed up Waimano Home for a whole day, near Waimano Home. Then that evening, about four o'clock, we came down several times to get supplies, food and whatnot. Most of the people living in the peninsula was up there already. Everybody ran up and, oh, the whole bunch was up there.

WN: Was the peninsula bombed at all?

MA: No, it wasn't bombed at all, but the concussion, you could feel. Rocks around there, everybody took off, went up to the highland. And then, towards the evening, we went to Waipahu, because the Waimano Home, they didn't have enough room to accommodate everybody, so they said, well, they up to capacity now, so you fellow gotta go someplace else. And then we went to Waipahu, to this Waipahu Japanese community club they have. And we went over there, and they told us, oh, they're all loaded. And then we went to the Hongwanji in Waipahu. And that night, we wasn't able to get in there. And they said, "Oh, too full," that they cannot. So we didn't have no choice, it was getting dark already. So we pulled way up, near the [O'ahu Sugar Company] manager's home, there was a straight road going up to his home. And we pull alongside in the cane field over there, and we parked our truck, and we slept in our truck, over there.

Oh, next morning, the poor kids looked like they had measles, the mosquito bite them all up (chuckles). But that night, we were so high up that we could see all of Pearl Harbor. And we'd still hear this blast. And what happened was the [USS] *Arizona*, and there was—to me, it looked like one of the ships in the dry dock, they caught on fire. I think they tried to blow the dry dock and this ship caught on fire. Finally I think the fire went into the ammunition part, and, oh, that thing was blowing that night. Oh boy, and they had this tracer bullets was inside there, I think you could see all that thing flying up. It was a sight. Hard to forget.

WN: Yeah.

MA: Then the next morning, we came down to the clubhouse, and we finally got room over there, and we stayed there for couple of weeks.

WN: You mean in the plantation?

MA: In the plantation clubhouse, yeah.

WN: So what, they had cots and things for you folks?

MA: No, we sleep on the floor. No accommodation. (Chuckles) Good thing we had blankets and whatnot, we had in the car, you see.

WN: Were there other people in the . . .

MA: Oh yes, there were full of other people.



WN: What about food?

MA: We have to supply our own. But during that first day, we came down [home], oh, several times in between. We'd tell the police, and police would tell us, "Well, you go down, you stay one hour or forty-five minutes," or whatever, and used to limit us to time we stay, so we rush in and we just throw everything in the car so that we can have food. So we had lot of food. The first day after the blast, we came down and took as much as we can. Milk and bread and whatnot. And people up there, nobody had chance to eat breakfast yet, being Sunday morning. So whatever we needed we kept, and the rest we just give it out to them. Didn't even try to sell it, you know. And then, months later, they had some kind of a OCD [Office of Civilian Defense], or whatever, set up, and somebody told them that we had given them bread and milk and whatnot, and that was something that, you know, survival already. You know, you gotta have something to eat. So whatever we kept for our, we had four kids I think, four, five kids. So whatever we needed we kept, and then the rest, we just gave it out. And some of them offered to pay.

"No," I said, "never mind the money." And we tried to give as much as we can.

And then, towards the end, we had to keep milk and bread for ourselves. At the end, we ran out, so we said, "Well, that's it already." And several of the people didn't get it and, boy, they made a big squawk, you know. I said, "We didn't bring the whole store up!" (Laughs) But that's how it goes. Point like that, why, they only thinking of themselves. You could really see how selfish people could be.

WN: What about the [O'ahu Sugar Company] plantation store? Did they supply anything?

MA: No, nobody supplied food, Pearl City. Later on, they paid us, actually, what we gave out.

WN: Who is they?

MA: They, I was just trying to think, they had this, some kind of a setup they had, the—what did they call it?

WN: Like the Red Cross or . . .

MA: Some relief, yes. 'Aiea was the headquarters, I think. And then, they came down months later and they talked with my brother, and he said, "Well, emergency like that, we didn't think of money, you know."

Most of the people, well, there's lot of them we don't know, and there were lot of them we knew, too, being our customers, so we just gave it out.

I don't know where the fund came from, but they did that. Said, "Well, we make an estimate of about how much," and later on, we were paid.

WN: So when were you able to go back to your home?

MA: Oh, about two weeks after.

WN: Two weeks? Oh.

MA: Yes, we finally came back.

WN: And when did you start to resume your business, normal business?

MA: I think about a week later, we came back and opened the store, about eight-thirty, nine o'clock in the morning, until about four-thirty. Then we rush back to Waipahu, the first couple of weeks. Then after we move back, then we (opened eight [A.M.] to five [P.M.]).

WN: Oh, so you opened the store one week after December 7.

MA: About a week after.

WN: Oh, I see. And what about delivering?

MA: No delivery already. Gasoline was rationed, and we hardly had enough gasoline rationed that delivery was entirely out during the war.

WN: The entire war years, you never went out?

MA: Well, we were delivering, but they would come and do their buying—see, the family is hard too, because the menfolks that were working, most of 'em were [Pearl Harbor] navy yard workers, and they were working twelve and fourteen hours. And the wives were doing the shopping and lot of 'em lived quite a ways off, and they couldn't drive, lot of 'em. So we used to just let them buy the merchandise in the (store). After we close the store, I used to deliver.

WN: These are the local . . .

MA: Yes, just for the local family, right in peninsula alone.

WN: So, like the Ford Island [families] and all that . . .

MA: Oh, that was entirely out.

WN: I wonder how they got their vegetables during the war.

MA: Well, I think the commissary probably. But after that, we didn't go back at all.

WN: So you relied all on walk-in customers . . .

MA: Yes.

WN: . . . from the peninsula.

MA: Well, during the war, the people from all over the place was coming in.

WN: Oh.

MA: Actually, my brother, he used to like to stock up his warehouse. We had a warehouse full of merchandise. So, where other stores were rationing out, we were giving them all they want

(chuckles). So people from, as far from Waipahu, used to come down. They hear, their friend would say, "Well, if you come down to our place, you can get all kinds of supply."

WN: How was he able to get so much supply?

MA: Well, he had a friend in American Factors, by the name of (Mr. Frank) Bellows. He was the manager over there. And this fellow, Bellows, he saw, or he felt, maybe he knew that maybe a war can start. So he stocked American Factors with so much merchandise, they couldn't find any more warehouses. So he was renting the railroad's [O.R. & L.] boxcar, and he was storing goods in there, for American Factors. Then when American Factors directors found out that he was doing too much stocking up, they fired him. The poor guy got fired, but as soon as he got fired, well, he started to do business his own. And I don't know what he was doing during the war. Maybe he was working for the government. That's one reason American Factors had plenty of merchandise, because this fellow Bellows was the smart man over there. So during the war, American Factors made money. They had the merchandise.

WN: So your main supplier was American Factors?

MA: Yes, American Factors [Amfac] and [Theo H.] Davies. Davies, they were pretty well stocked. This fellow, [William] Baird, I think he was the grocery manager at Davies. During the war, after Amfac's supply ran out, they didn't do too good in grocery. Davies did good. This fellow Baird was smart. During the war, he tried to get as much as he can on the cargo. Mr. Baird and my brother were pretty close friends, so when this cargo is coming in in about ten more days, then he'll call my brother and tell 'em come down and give him the order. So we had good supply, you know. And so my brother would go down and give him all the order, and then Davies used to fill our order. They never cut on our order. Whatever Mr. Baird write out, why, the warehouse used to fill (the whole order).

WN: Did their cost or prices remain the same?

MA: Well, accordingly. Sometimes it cost more. But during the war, price wasn't the item, price wasn't anything. It was [obtaining] the merchandise, I think (chuckles). Try to get the goods. So we did pretty good during the war. And we were in good supply.

WN: So, relatively speaking, you couldn't go out and get orders and, you know, with the military . . .

MA: No, the military we cut out altogether.

WN: So, you did less business during the war, but enough to . . .

MA: Oh yes, what we were losing on the military side, well, we were getting from the outside. Customers from all over, not only from Pearl City and peninsula, but people from other towns, like from 'Aiea (and Waipahu).

WN: And the stores that they usually went to were low in stock?

MA: I guess so, yes.

WN: Oh, so your brother must have had good connections, then?

MA: We had pretty good connections, you know. And during the war, they don't give us enough gasoline, so we had to rely on this trucking company. There were lot of smaller guys [who] owned one or two trucks, you know. They were doing all our hauling. That was Shintaku. He has a, some kind of connection, Waipahu boy. He had a big truck. At first, this Kazama from 'Aiea started the trucking with another guy from 'Aiea. And they were doing the hauling. And this guy—I don't know whether you remember, but like Crisco and stuff, instead of can, it was coming in bottles during the war, because can is scarce. And, oh, he used to break that, purposely look like. You know, you get on the truck and then just throw 'em down. Bust one or two glass. And one time, my brother called him, he said, "Eh, why you have to throw that thing down?"

He said, "Oh, that's all right. Broken one, you take 'em back, they gonna replace it." That's the kind of attitude he had.

So he [brother] got disgusted with him, and he threw him out and told this guy Shintaku, if he would do our hauling.

And Shintaku said, "Oh, all right." He said, "I'll do your hauling."

So when the cargo came in, he told Shintaku, "You go to [Theo H.] Davies and pick up my stuff, because I going get quite a bit of stuff."

He tell, "Oh yeah?"

He said, "Why don't you make my stop at Davies [your] first stop?" He went over there and he couldn't bring 'em all back. (Chuckles)

He came down, he says, "Eh, how come you get so much merchandise?"

We were lucky. Davies, this fellow, Mr. Baird, used to fill our order.

WN: So, during the war, you folks relied upon these trucking companies?

MA: Oh yes, we had to.

WN: So you didn't have to worry too much about the gasoline ration?

MA: Well, they didn't give us enough gasoline so we were keeping for our own.

WN: I see. Let me turn over the tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay. So, let's see, you folks relied a lot on the trucking companies. What about like the Dillinghams and those, the richer families, were they, did they stay in the area?

MA: No, they didn't stay in the area.

WN: They---wartime, they were . . .

MA: I think after the war, some of the homes they rented out.

WN: So did you folks make more money or less money during the war?

MA: Oh, we made more money during the war.

WN: With less effort, too, then.

MA: Oh yes.

WN: You didn't have to go all the way around.

MA: Yes (chuckles).

WN: Wow.

MA: The main thing during the war and after the war, the guy with the most merchandise win.

WN: So did any other stores say, "How come you folks have so much?" Or anything like that?

MA: I don't know. (Chuckles)

WN: What about liquor? Liquor was rationed.

MA: Oh yes, liquor was rationed.

WN: So you sold less liquor then?

MA: Oh, we were all on quotas. And we had pretty good quotas, though. So when the convoy comes in, then we have all kinds of liquor. And it's all rationed, one bottle a customer. I still have a ration card.

WN: Oh yeah?

MA: I'll show you afterwards (chuckles).

WN: Okay.

MA: The liquor ration card, you know, like you can buy one case of beer a week, or one quart of whiskey, or whatever, hard liquor. One cardholder. During the war, when we have liquor come in, my brother used to take care all the liquor, and boy, he was (busy)—we used to have line up (for) liquor for about a block long.

WN: Oh yeah? What about you folks as store owners? Did you folks have to have cards too? Or could you folks just more or less just buy from your own store?

MA: Well, we were rationed too. We had to carry our own card and, lot of time, we let people use it if they, you know, close friends like that. Aliens, they cannot buy.

WN: Oh.

MA: So some of our close friends that really need, why, I used to buy on our card, and take it to them.

WN: Did military personnel, during the war, come to your store?

MA: Oh yes. During the war, we were doing lot of business with the [naval] ships. The officers had their own ship steward. And the ship steward used to come down and buy the vegetables and fruits and whatnot, what they cannot get [on base]. They'd come down from the landing, and walk up to the store, and then I used to load the truck and take it down to their boat. They had a small boat that commutes. The stewards can use the boat too, you see. So they come and [purchase] the stuff, and I take it down to them.

WN: So were you happy when you didn't have to go to military bases anymore?

MA: Well, the going around was enjoyable for me, because I never liked to stay in the store, you know. I (chuckles) rather *stay go* outside. So I used to enjoy that outside, meet all the family, ladies and—you can hear all kinds of stuff, the ladies tell you [about] the military.

(Laughter)

MA: But I never carry what we talk, you see, that's one reason they used to tell me more, I guess.

(Laughter)

MA: Those women, they knew all about what the movement of the military is, you'd be surprised, boy. Things like having a special maneuver like that, you know. You see them every morning, so they get so used to it, and they want to chitchat a lot too. And they sometimes knew everything. Oh, I used to know all what the movement of the military was (chuckles).

WN: This was before the war, though.

MA: Before the war, yes. But those are all military stuff that you shouldn't go out and talk about.

WN: So after the war started, you had to, you were more or less staying in the store.

MA: Oh yes.

WN: People came to you, instead.

MA: Yes.

WN: I see. I see. And you told me one time that—oh, first of all, what became of the Japanese that lived on the peninsula? You know, who were working as the yardboys for the richer families?

MA: Oh, they were—I don't know. There were lot of work, all kinds, because short of men. So I



don't know what they were doing. I know one of my friends was living across the street. He was working for Dr. [Arthur] Hodgins. Then when the war started, he quit and I think he came home and he started to do laundry. Oh boy, those defense workers like that, was living over there, all bachelors. He was doing good, doing laundry, right at home, you know. He made a fortune, too.

WN: Tell me something about those defense workers. You said after the war started they started coming in to the peninsula?

MA: Yes. All these bachelors used to get together, maybe four or five of them in one house.

WN: Oh. And these were houses formerly . . .

MA: Family used to live in them.

WN: Richer families?

MA: Well, they had lot of other cottages, rental units, that the military personnel was living in. Like from navy, naval air station, those sailors. And some, even from Hickam, some of them was living there. But most of them was navy. Ford Island and [Pearl Harbor] Naval Shipyard.

WN: So you could say that the population of the peninsula increased quite a bit.

MA: Oh yes, increased. There were lot of Filipinos.

WN: Oh yeah?

MA: Filipino defense workers. I think the majority of the place was filled with Filipinos. They quit the plantation and they worked for the navy and the army, like that, defense work.

WN: And they rented houses over there too?

MA: Yes, they rented houses.

WN: And they came to your store too?

MA: Oh yes, they were patronizing our place too. So the business kind of changed, more into Oriental goods.

WN: Oh, like what?

MA: Well, the Filipinos, they go [for] rice and whatnot.

WN: Oh, you didn't have rice before?

MA: Oh, we had rice too, but we didn't sell too much rice because majority of our trade was with the *Haole* people.

WN: So before the war, when most of the trade was with *Haoles*, you'd sell like, what, can goods and . . .

- MA: Can goods, vegetables, meat. We had meat too. Well, mostly can goods and stuff.
- WN: And then, when the war started, and Filipinos were coming in, it was rice . . .
- MA: Different type of trade. Like mostly Oriental goods. Yeah, war sure can change things.
- WN: There were a lot of bachelors. Defense workers from the Mainland came too.
- MA: Oh yes.
- WN: Were there any problems?
- MA: No, we didn't have any.
- WN: Between the locals and the Mainland workers?
- MA: No, they didn't have no problem, no. Don't look like, anyway.
- WN: Seems like, you know, before the war, it was mostly, you know, just Japanese and richer *Haole* people [living] in the area. And then, all of a sudden, the war starts and you have . . .
- MA: Altogether (different customers).
- WN: . . . young *Haole* guys and young Filipino guys, and you know.
- MA: *Haole* guys were all from the Mainland, defense workers. But some of the defense workers, some of them was pretty old, older people was coming in too. And they had lot of women workers. And later on the navy built a big barracks-like building for all the women workers.
- WN: Where, on the peninsula?
- MA: No, that was above Pearl City side. They had one right next to the graveyard. The navy built a big, sort of a barracks-like.
- WN: Oh, you mean Pearl City?
- MA: Yes, way above. Then they used to come down. They had several big warehouses on the peninsula too, during the war and after the war. So they were there, even after the war, for a long time, they were there. They built two or three big warehouses right on the waterfront.
- WN: Now, were there like price controls for you folks?
- MA: Oh yes, we had the price controls. But that was before the war. National Recovery Act, that's when we had the price controls.
- WN: Oh, in the thirties?
- MA: Yes.
- WN: But there wasn't a . . .

MA: During the war there wasn't. But the price was mostly, I think it was a set price, though. There was a price control, I think, yes. They did have price control during the war. You cannot sell merchandise for whatever price you want, you know.

WN: So these defense workers, they lived on the peninsula, and then they worked in, say, Hickam or Pearl Harbor. So they drove?

MA: I think they drove. I guess they drove over there. Most likely, I think, they were driving, commuting. I guess they, guy have a car and they get passengers to fill the car and go to work together.

WN: Okay. And then, you said, later on, during the war, the navy took over some of the land in the peninsula?

MA: Yes, after the war. We were negotiating during the war, towards the end. And when they finally took over, that was right after the war [ended].

WN: But what about that waterfront parcel that you folks had?

MA: Oh, that was condemned long time ago.

WN: Tell me about that.

MA: Did I tell you about the guys went in there and cut the trees all down?

WN: Why don't you tell me that story. This was right after the war started.

MA: Yes.

WN: And you folks had a parcel of land near the waterfront.

MA: Yes. So they went in there and chopped all the trees down and cleared it up. Then this guy from the court, I don't know what you call it. Anyway, he came down and said, "We're going to condemn your land over there. The navy wants it."

Before this guy came down, one of our friends was living right next to that vacant lot, and she said, "The navy took your land over there."

I says, "No, not that I know of."

And then she said, "Well, no more trees already. It's all cut down. It's level already. They got the bulldozer, the land is all level up already."

WN: Where were you folks at that time?

MA: Oh we were in Pearl City, same place.

WN: How far away was that land from your place?

MA: Well, that was one block below, near the waterfront side. (Our home was next to the store

building.)

WN: You didn't know they were bulldozing.

MA: I didn't know. And so after she told me, I drove down and I saw the whole place all cleared up. And then, this guy from the court said, "We're going to condemn that place."

So I told him, "You going to condemn the place? You already went in my property already, cleared up the property." Then he want me to sign that. I said, "No, I'm not going to sign until my brother come home from town."

So as soon as he came home, I said, "This guy is waiting." I said, "Want to condemn the place." But I said, "This morning, they went in there and they cleared all the trees already. It's all level already."

WN: How big was the property?

MA: That was two lots over there, so it's about a half a acre. Sort of a triangle-shape lot, and the roadside was wide, but towards the backside, it kind of narrowed. Was on the corner. Aloha Avenue and Coral Avenue. And so I told him [brother], "But they went in there already," I said. "These guys are trespassing, because it wasn't signed and it's not signed yet, see. They're trespassing our property, we can sue them." (Chuckles)

He look at me, he says, "You want to go Sand Island?"

(Laughter)

WN: You mean internment?

MA: Internment.

(Laughter)

MA: So I said, "Okay, then you go in and sign it." (Laughs) Oh shucks. That was one, I never will forget.

WN: So that person was from the military court?

MA: No, he was from the judiciary.

WN: Oh, Office of the [Military Governor], I mean, was martial law, though, then.

MA: That time, yes.

WN: So did you get anything for that land?

MA: Well, we got less than what we paid for. It was condemned. After that, when the navy finally took over all of the [Pearl City] Peninsula, it was sort of a negotiated deal. We talked about it, and then before we went to settle that thing, we hired an appraiser on the land value to fight for it. And we hired this Judge Cooke, he was a retired judge. And he said, "Well, the

best thing is you got to get an appraiser to go to court, you know."

What they were trying to give us was, we thought was not enough, so we hired him. And then we got this man to appraise the property. And at that time, he says, "If the waterfront side wasn't taken already by the navy, we could fight for regular market price. At that time, I think the market price around there was about twenty-five cents a square foot. And so he said, "To go to court, we can fight for twenty-five cents." But he says he doubt it because the outside [i.e., waterfront] is all been taken up [by the military]. He said maybe you going to end up with ten cents a square foot, or maybe a little better. But he said we can fight for twenty-five cents.

WN: This is for the land that your store was on and everything, your house?

MA: Yes, we had quite a bit. Next to the store we had about five lots, that was about acre and a quarter. Altogether, it was about three acres of land, I think, with the home and the store and another vacant lot, you know. Then we had two lots, back of our place. My father bought that two lots, and then he had four rental cottages on. But my father had rheumatism, he was laid up for over six months, or maybe more. Then finally the doctors recommended said, "The best thing for you is go to hot spring." So he decided to go back to Japan. And that was in . . .

WN: Just before the war?

MA: Yes, that was in November '41. And soon as he went back over there, and then the war started in December. So he was stuck in Japan for over three years. But all that land too.

WN: So, soon after the war started, the navy condemned your waterfront land.

MA: Yes, that was the first one they condemned.

WN: And what about like the [wealthy families] and all that? What happened to them?

MA: You see, those people, they could just about give 'em away, because they can write 'em off in taxes. During the war, of course they feel that, well, they can write it off. So they probably gave it away, I don't know. But looks like they [navy] didn't pay too much, 'cause those big shots they get so much income, that it was good chance to don't pay tax. Maybe it was cheaper for them. If they sold at high price, and then they still gotta pay tax on top of it. They figure, well if they give it away, they can write it off. So they didn't care.

WN: Were you folks the only Japanese landowners in the peninsula?

MA: No, there were quite a bit of Japanese families.

WN: So they all had to negotiate sales?

MA: Yes, negotiate.

WN: This was when, '46? After the war ended.

MA: After the war ended, '45 or '46. Then after we negotiated, we rented from the navy, we were

living. We stayed there over three years.

WN: Oh, I see.

MA: And we were trying to relocate, and we were looking all over the place. And we couldn't find a place to go. And lot of people, the Japanese families especially, they went to Wai'anae side. And they bought land in Wai'anae. Wai'anae was cheap. But we figure if we still want to run a store, we wanted to get into a community where you can open a store. Like, you go to Wai'anae, not enough houses in those days yet. So it wasn't suitable for us, so we didn't go to Wai'anae, you know. And we were trying to look all over, and for a while we went looking downtown side too, and Kuli'ou'ou way too. But we couldn't find property that we want, so we finally gave up that side. And then we start looking this [Windward] side, and one day—at first, we were looking for a home, you know. And if we get a place where we can find a house suitable enough, and then we go see where we can open business. And before, Marshall Wright—his father used to be mayor [Fred Wright]—he was a real estate agent over here. So we saw him and then, after long time, Marshall Wright said, "Oh, you want a good big house, I have one on Kainalu."

And so we went to look for it. And he says, "You know this house was built by this guy, Kuntz, he's a German spy." His house, it was, two-story building.

So my brother said, "I think this is a pretty good deal, you know."

Oh, the property is big. He still lives over there. And there were two cottages, one in the front, and the front house is a big house, two story, and then there was another—what they call it—guest house. Was a good-size house, too. And so, he bought that. And then we all lived together for a while up there. And I was living upstairs and he was downstairs.

And before we bought that place, we told Marshall Wright that we want a business property. He had one business property [available] on Oneawa Street. And he said, "Oh, I have one lot over there."

I don't know how much we paid. Anyway, we had one lot over there. So we bought that one lot, and then he bought that house in Kainalu.

WN: So in '48 you moved, late '47, '48, you moved out here to Kailua. I was wondering, was business pretty good throughout the war, at the peninsula?

MA: Oh yes.

WN: And then what about when the war ended and then you folks were renting from the military, was business still doing good?

MA: Not as good as wartime, no, but was pretty good. But we feel that we don't own anything anymore, and we had to rent from the navy, so if we stay there too long, we going to give 'em all back in rent. So we thought we better relocate and buy our own land, and so finally we moved this side.

WN: So people, after the war ended, they started moving out, you know, the defense workers and so forth?



MA: Oh yes, start to. Then lot of the old-timers living over there, they had to sell their homes, so some moved to 'Aiea and Hālawā Valley, and some went to Wai'anae, they all scattered after that.

WN: Okay, so, and all through the war, nobody, there was no problems being Japanese or anything?

MA: Yes, we didn't feel that much.

WN: Okay, so then '48, you folks moved to Kailua and started the Oneawa Market?

MA: Yes, Oneawa Market.

WN: So you kept the same wholesalers and things like that? Or did you change?

MA: Oh yes, we change it to entirely different business.

WN: So the market that I see now, that's your old market, Oneawa Market?

MA: But that one, when we started, we had only one lot, so the store was kind of small. And half of it was warehouse in the back, and then half in the front was a store. And then we wanted to buy the next lot, there was one more vacant lot, and we wanted to buy that place, and we was looking for the owner. This fellow, Chinese fellow, he still live over there. That property was for sale after a while, and he had the listing. And that Chinese fellow said, "Don't you want to buy that lot? I have the listing."

And so my brother was saying, "We'd like to buy, but how much you want for it?"

And he said, oh, he gotta consult with the owner. The owner actually lived in Hilo. But his nephew was working at [Theo H.] Davies.

And about the same time, he met this nephew in Davies, and this nephew said, "You know, next to your store over there, my uncle owns that, and he wants to sell it. Why don't you buy it?"

So he said, "Oh yeah, I'd like to buy it."

And then, when we started to talk, the uncle that owned the property said that he gave this agent, I don't know how many days, I think 90 or 120 days time limit. And anyway, he had 60 more days on his contract. So he said, "If we negotiate between ourselves, I can come down little bit, and then still I can save money," on what he has to pay. So he said, "Why don't you wait, and in the meantime, if anybody wants to buy the place, I'm gonna boost the price up so he won't get it, but my price is this," he set the price. And we wait till the time lapse, you know. So after the [60] days was over, then we deal directly through the Bank of Hawai'i, the Hilo branch bank, and that's how we got out of paying the commission to the real estate agent. So he came out all right and we came out good, too.

WN: I was wondering, you know, before the war started, you had the business and you folks were going out. Then the war came and you folks couldn't go out and deliver, but you folks made good. I was wondering, what do you think would have happened if the war never came?

MA: Probably do the same thing.

(Laughter)

MA: The military too, it's not bad, you know. They were really friendly. You know, families. Actually they were happy to have somebody that they can rely on. I used to go out and sometime they say, "I really need this thing for my party, don't fail me now."

I says, "Whatever I'm taking the order, I won't fail you."

So once they get to know you, they depend more on you. And, what I cannot fill, I'll just tell them right off, "No, I cannot take this order, because I won't be able to." And make sure that what I'm selling is guaranteed I'm going to deliver. That way you get more trusted. Lot of times, I used to deliver, and sometimes get so much order put out that I get real late. I know, on December 6, [Pearl Harbor] Naval Shipyard was my first stop, I got out of navy yard half past seven [7:30] that night, after I got through delivering. I still have Hickam Field and Makalapa area, I had all that area to deliver yet. So from the navy yard, I went straight up to Makalapa, and I delivered all Makalapa and coming down. And that's when the next morning, the war started.

And funny thing, you know, I was delivering to the admiral's quarter that night, and these admirals they have their own official cars. And this admiral was going to a party, and the chauffeur, the sailor, was outside waiting for him to come out. I went in and my helper took the stuff inside, and I was outside in the truck. And was talking with this sailor, and he said, "The admiral is going to town." I don't know, someplace in town, anyway, some hotel in Waikīkī. So he says, "I don't know what time I'm going come home. Probably three, four o'clock in the morning, but don't say anything," he was telling me. (Laughs)

But after the war started, there were all kinds of (rumors). Because I talked with the sailor, I knew where he was going, but after the war started, December 7, when it came out in the paper, [it said that] he was supposed to be having a party in the navy yard. That's how funny things goes. What you know where he was and what the paper say, you know. He don't want to say that he was in the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, or wherever his party was, so he says he was at the navy yard, officers' club or something. That's what the paper said. So I start laughing to myself, you know, how funny things can turn, you know.

WN: This was the admiral?

MA: Admiral, yes.

WN: This is [Husband E.] Kimmel?

MA: Kimmel, yes.

WN: Yeah. He was at the Royal Hawaiian or Halekūlani, or something. Was it Halekūlani?

MA: I don't know where he was, but he went to a party in a hotel.

WN: So do you think about your days at the peninsula?

- MA: Oh yes, once in a while. But now they don't let you go down there. But every once in a while I used to go down. The last time I went down there, well, the place next to the store, they knock all the building down, there wasn't any more building there. And my father planted lot of fruit trees, and had lot of mango trees. And the mango tree is still there.
- WN: Yeah?
- MA: Yeah. But we had big monkeypod tree in the back. That monkeypod tree was still there.
- WN: When was this?
- MA: Oh, this is quite a number of years already. I think I didn't go down there for the last ten years already.
- WN: What do they use that area for now, do you know?
- SA: It's built up into park, I think.
- MA: That area?
- WN: A park? [A baseball field for military personnel.]
- MA: They made into a park.
- WN: For the military?
- MA: Yes, the kids, playground. The mango tree is still there and the place is nice and grassy.
- WN: You mean, it doesn't have buildings used for storage or anything like that?
- MA: Well, the storage is all around the waterfront, where they can bring the ship alongside. So. . . . That place, I think they can dock a ship right alongside, all around.
- WN: Oh.
- MA: They dug it, dredged it all out.
- WN: You mean after the war.
- MA: After the war. I know, even aircraft carrier was docked out there.
- WN: A big change from your days, I guess . . .
- MA: Yeah.
- WN: . . . with the store. Well, okay, I think that's all.
- MA: Okay.

WN: Thank you very much for your time.

END OF INTERVIEW

# **AN ERA OF CHANGE**

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### **Volume I**

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